CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

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Many Northern Conferences and Meetings.

In many spheres of Church life there is a constant inter-course among the Northern countries, and every summer a number of conferences, courses for youth leaders, and religious council meetings take place. A short account of some of the most important ones is given below.

A conference for Northern Church Musicians was conducted in Finland early in the summer. Some 300 people took part in the meeting, at which it was decided to set up a Northern Church Musicians' Council which, among other things, is to draw up a joint declaration on the newly established international co-operation in regard to church music among the Lutheran churches all over the world. At the moment a hymnal is being compiled, consisting of some 60 well-known tunes of hymns, common to all the Northern countries.

Shortly after, 350 people assembled in Denmark for a Northern Conference on Stewardship. These meetings take place every second year and this was the sixth in the series. The purpose of the meetings is to take up for consideration common problems of stewardship, and to strengthen the fellowship in Christian service.

At the beginning of August a Northern conference on The Quandary of the Modern Self-Supporting Woman was held at Sparreholm Castle in Sweden. Among those present were the former Danish Minister for Commerce, Mrs. Lis Groes, and the Norwegian prison governor, Miss Margrethe Parm. The special problems of the self-supporting woman were discussed in detail, and the duties of the Church in connection with such problems.

At the same time 200 young people from the Northern countries were gathered together in Finland in a Camp on Foreign Mission. In the light of the main subject "Thy Will Be Done", questions bearing upon a personal faith in Christianity and on the call to foreign mission were the subjects of lectures, Bible readings and study circles.

At Nyborg Strand in Denmark 215 people met for the Northern Karmel Meeting under the chairmanship of Rev. Faye Hansen from Haifa. The Karmel movement works in co-operation with the so-called "Messiah Jews" who believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but at the same time accept their position as an organic part of the Jewish people.

The Y.W.C.A. and the Student Christian Movement have conducted courses for youth leaders during August. In connection with the Student Movement's course, the Northern committee, planning the big Northern students' meeting in Denmark next year, also met.

Finally, the Northern Council for Home Mission met for their annual conference in Copenhagen at the end of August, at which questions relating to revivalist activities, the confession, and the relationship with the Church, on the whole, were debated.

Northern Folk High School to Be Established in the Spring.

On May 1st, 1958, a Northern-European folk high school will be opened at Snoghøj, Denmark, the leader of which is to be the well-known Danish folk high school instructor, Poul Engberg. A former athletics folk high school is to be converted into an ordinary folk high school, since it proved impossible to establish one at Aabenraa, nearer to the Danish-German border, as first planned.

The Northern-European folk high school may accommodate 100 students from the Northern countries as well as from other European countries. In the winter there will be a 6-months' course, especially dealing with the common European cultural heritage and the various cultural currents connected with this, and a journey in Europe will conclude the course. In the summer, efforts will be made to supply extensive information about Europe through courses and travels on the Continent.

I.C.C.C. Forms European Alliance.

An alliance of the circles in Europe co-operating with the International Council of Christian Churches has been set up under the name "The International Council of Christian Churches' European Alliance". The news of this was given at the conference in Hillerød, Denmark, which was arranged in August by the Northern Evangelical Council (see CN No. 28). The Rev. J.C. Maris, Amsterdam, is to be the Secretary of the Alliance.

At the conference, which was attended by some 200 people (some of them from non-Northern countries also), several resolutions were passed. One of them warns against, not only the World Council of Churches, but also the International Missionary Council. The resolution maintains that the World Council of Churches, to a large extent, is led by men "who doubt or deny the fundamental truths of the Bible concerning Christ". It furthermore says that many of the prominent persons in the World Council of Churches also play a dominant part in the International Missionary Council, and that the aims and means of the two organizations in many respects are the same. The resolution expresses the hope that "the present debate on the relationship between the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches may have the result that the mission societies in the Northern countries adopt an attitude which is in full conformity with the Bible and the Commandments which Christ has given His congregation".

The President of the I.C.C.C., Carl McIntire, attended the meeting as speaker.

No comments are needed to the resoltion quoted above. What is new, however, is that this Council now directs its absurd accusations also against the International Missionary Council.

DENMARK

Professor Prenter on Intercourse With the Churches Behind the "Iron Curtain".

"The right attitude towards the Churches behind the "iron curtain" must, above all else, combine clearly defined doctrines with human sympathy", Professor Prenter, Århus, Denmark, writes in a detailed article in the Northern ecumenical periodical "Kristen Gemenskap". As one of the fundamental assertions, Professor Prenter stresses the fact that Lutheran Christians cannot but support democracy at the time when the totalitarian and democratic systems are fighting a battle of life and death. Thus it must be, not because Lutheran theology sanctifies democracy, but because democracy represents the greater measure of political liberty, i.e. the possibility for employing sensible judgment in arranging the social order.

The presupposition for this view is the Lutheran conception of the independence of the secular government, which is directed by ordinary common sense. The consequence of this view must be that society cannot in the long run be ruled by an authoritarian government which from above enforces its will upon the nation. This fundamental point of view must never, by word or deed, become a matter of doubt, neither to those behind or those on our own side of the "iron curtain".

Professor Prenter divides the Christians behind the "iron curtain" into two main categories: those who share our view of the authoritarian rule, and thosewho do not.

The former category may again be divided up in sub-divisions: 1) the openly declared adversaries, many of whom are outside the "iron curtain" as refugees, 2) those who offer passive resistance, and 3) the adherents of unresistant passivity. In many cases those in the last group have come to their conclusion on the grounds that the Church has no right to offer resistance at this moment, having failed so grievously at an earlier period in history.

The latter category may be divided into 1) those who are in good faith, as for instance, the Orthodox Church, whose view on the State is different from ours, and adherents of an orthodox Lutheran theology who regard any government as the servant of God against which no criticism may be directed, and 2) the actual opportunists who are collaborators for the sake of either personal gain or that of their Church.

Professor Prenter emphasizes that it is very difficult to classify people according to the above outline in the actual situation. Besides, we must not judge too quickly people who adopt another standpoint in the political conflicts of our time than the one which we ourselves believe we should have taken in their place.

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A political choice may become a heresy which we must condemn unconditionally, but the main point of view must be to try to preserve contact with as many of our fellow-Christians as possible, when such contact is not detrimental to the fundamental suppositions which were our starting point. If we must break with the Christians somewhere, there must be a definite reason for it, as, for instance, if they hand over to the authorities people with whom we cannot sever contact, or if they in a glaring manner desert the Christian confession.

Finally, Professor Prenter in his article warns against letting selfrighteousness dominate our opinions of the ecclesiastics behind the "iron curtain", and emphasizes how difficult it is, really to understand their situation, and how easy to set up false analogies. It is not possible to draw simple parallels, he points out, between the situation in the countries behind the "iron curtian" and that of Germany under Hitler, or of occupied Norway.

700 Attend European Y.M.C.A. Conference.

"Laudate Dominus" (Praise Be to the Lord) was the motto of the European Y.M.C.A. conference in Århus, Denmark, this summer, at which 700 members from 13 European countries were present. The conference included lectures and Bible classes as well as sports and music.

The chairman of the European committee of the Y.M.C.A., Mr. Hugo Cedergren, gave the opening address, in which he stressed the duty of the Y.M.C.A. to work for understanding and co-operation in Europe and, by word and deed, to be a witness of Christianity in this continent which was formerly the centre of Christendom, but is now harrassed by uncertainty.

The conference concluded with a performance in the Cathedral of Århus of the new Y.M.C.A. cantata "Laudate Dominum" by Axel Madsen, Copenhagen. At the end, the many members present joined in a liturgic evening prayer which was transmitted in the Danish television.

"Youth for Christ" Congress in Copenhagen.

The ninth world congress for the evangelization among young people, arranged by the international revivalist movement "Youth for Christ" took place in Copenhagen from August 4-11. 400 permanent members from 27 countries, including 125 from U.S.A. and 100 from Germany, took part in the congress. Instructive lectures and inspiring addresses were delivered, and every evening there were public revivalist meetings for young people which were attended by up to an average of 2.000 people. After the congress proper, the members were divided among altogether 60 revivalist campaigns, mostly in Denmark, but also in Sweden, Germany, Holland and Belgium.

Among the speakers were the President of the movement, Tedd Engstrøm;the European leader, Dennis Clark; and the overseas leader, Sam Wolgemuth. Dennis Clark was the chairman of the congress. Among the few Danish clergymen actively engaged in the work of the congress was the President of the Evangelical Alliance in Denmark, the Rev, Georg Bartholdy, Copenhagen. Professor N.H. Søe, Copenhagen, also spoke at an afternoon session for members of the congress.

The public meetings were characterized by an extensive musical programme, alternating with short addresses and testimonies.

17.000 Bibles Distributed In Danish Hotels.

There is now hardly a hotel in Denmark in which there is not a Bible to be found in every single room. This distribution of Bibles is done by the "Christian Association for Commercial Travellers", and since the middle of the 1930'ies more than 17.000 Bibles have been handed out. During the last five years 10 o/o of the Bibles have been in English and supplied by the international organization "The Gideons" as a service to the tourists.

Died.

Bishop Niels Munk Plum, former Bishop of Nykøbing, Falster, from 1942 to 1950, has died, 77 years of age. Niels Munk Plum was a Professor of Dogmatics before becoming a Bishop.

Theological Conference on "War and the Gospel".

From August 28th - 31st, 30 theologians from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Western Germany were assembled at Askov Folk High School for a conference on the subject "War and the Gospel". The conference was arranged by the so-called "historical peace churches" together with a number of Western German churches. Among the speakers were the French theologian, Jean Laserre, Professor G. Harbsmeier, Germany, and the Norwegian Kierkegaard scholar, Per Lønning.

FINLAND

Christian Responsibility for Society.

During the summer the "Association for Christian Culture" in Finland invited to a conference on the subject "The Christian duty towards society". Speakers and members also included people from the other Northern countries. The conference was held at the technological town of Otaniemi, and in his opening address, the President of the Association, Viljo Castren, civil engineer, pointed out that the ultra-modern chapel for technologians in the town was a witness to the fact that times change as well as man. In the chapel the altar-piece is a cross, surrounded by God's free nature which may be seen through a wall of glass.

At the end of the conference the main contents of the discussions were drawn up in the following five points: 1) a new ideal must be established for the Christian home, and life in the home must be of such a nature that all its members are happy to be there, 2) a special responsibility must be acknowledged in regard to the lonely young people moving to big residential quarters, 3) a still greater number of laymen must be drawn into active work and trained for parish work, 4) the new methods of research, and the results of psychology and sociology must be employed also in Christian activities, and 5) in the cross-fire of politics efforts should be made to set up Christian views in opposition to the purely materialistic motives for action.

Social Democratic Pioneer Challenges Materialism.

The now 84 years old pioneer of the Finnish Social Democratic Party, Senator Oskari Tokoi, has delivered a notable address in the Berghälls Church in Helsinki (Helsingfors) this summer, in which he challenged the historical materialism and its consequences.

Oskari Tokoi has been a miner in America and a farmer in his own country. He has been a Member of Parliament and Senator and, during "the red revolt" in Finland, Commissionar for Public Supplies. Later, he moved to Russia and from there to America where he was a journalist. This summer he visited his native country for the second time on the occasion of the 50 years' jubilee of the Parliament and the organizing of the working classes.

In the course of his speech in the Berghälls Church, the old labour leader said, among other things: "In the old days we used to sing: 'Then comrades, come rally! And the last fight let us face. The International unites the human race.' But the means we employed were not always the right ones. We quite literally adopted the historical materialism to which neither ideals nor religion are realities of any importance. This point of view led us into an egoistical activity for group interests only, so that the ideals which had originally moved us were effaced and eventually disappeared. Now we have tasted the fruits of hate and revenge and we have experienced the truth of the Finnish saying that 'revenge spoils the seed in the soil and the fish in the ocean'. We must refrain from hate and revenge. They do not lead to the goal."

During his stay in Finland, Oskari Tokoi also spoke at the summer rally of the Association of Christian Labour Youth at Varkaus and at a Christian open air meeting in Helsinki (Helsingfors).

Opening Performance of the MRA-film "Freedom" in Helsinki (Helsingfors)

In the middle of August the showing of the Moral Re-Armament film "Freedom" opened in one of the big cinemas in Helsinki (Helsingfors). At the opening performance the King of Uganda, Omukama Bunyoro, Prince Majugo, and the Chief of the Hausa tribe were present, among others. All three have taken part in the preparations for the film which was shot in Africa, with amateur actors, by the photographers Rikhard Tegström and Aimo Jaderholm. On the opening evening the President of the Finnish Parliament, K.A. Fagerholm, several members of the Corps Diplomatique, Members of Parliament, Members of the Cabinet and prominent men in cultural life were also present. Two Bishops, Max von Bonsdorff and G.O. Rosenqvist, also attended the performance.

The film relates the story of a threatening revolt in an African state under British sovereignty, and how the national and international problems are solved when each individual begins with himself, listens to the voice of God, and acts in accordance with His absolute commandments.

Occasioned by the showing of the film a new discussion on the relations between Moral Re-Armament on the one side and the Church and the Christian message on the other, in as much as the film allows the problems to be solved in a predominantly non-Christian environment.

Women Pastors Not an Ordinary Feminist Question.

The discussion about allowing women to take Holy Orders in the Lutheran National Church has once more become topical in Finland. The reason is, that a report by the committee set up by the Church Synod to investigate the position of women theologians in the Church, will shortly be published, in which it says that no weithty theological arguments against women pastors have been found.

The Finland-Swedish weekly "Församlingsbladet" writes in this connection that this is no ordinary case of women's rights. The Church does not in any way disparage women even though it does not permit women to take Orders. Many are of the opinion that the valuable contribution by women in a number of special fields of activity of the Church would be harmed if women, on top of this, should also accept the work and responsibilities of a clergyman's office.

The paper agrees that there are probably no theological arguments of any weight against women pastors, but it advocates caution in a matter about which there is so much disagreement and uncertainty. Only if a shortage of clergymen should become serious and the Church thus unable to meet its obligations towards the congregations, should one not hesitate to ordain women, the "Församlingsbladet" concludes.

Amendments Proposed to Legislation Concerning Marriage in the Northern Countries.

In the course of the Northern congress for lawyers, held in Helsinki (Helsingfors) at the end of August, various proposals for important amendments in the marriage legislation in the Northern countries were made. The reason is that it has been statistically proved that no less than 70 % of the young people convicted of crimes, come from homes which were dissolved by divorce - in the case of those convicted more than once the figure is even 94 %. These figures were provided by the Finnish lawyer, Helvi Sipilä, who suggested that the joint taxation of married couples, which is often a reason for divorce in the Northern countries, should be abolished. She further proposed that the legislation concerning divorce should include a clause enabling the courts to deny divorce in cases where it would be obviously detrimental to the welfare of the children.

Conference for Architects and Clergymen Concerning Church Architecture.

Taking the lively debate this summer about modern church architecture for its starting-point, the Cultural Committee of the Lutheran National Church and the Finnish Architects' Association have invited to a conference for clergymen and architects about these questions on November 19-20 in Helsinki (Helsingfors).

ICELAND

New Church in Reykjavik.

This summer a big new church in modern style has been built in the Capital of Iceland. The church which has cost 5 million Icelandic crowns, was dedicated by Bishop 'Asmundur Gudmundsson. It may seat 500 people, is built from re-inforced concrete, and has a copper roof. Pleasant and appropriate rooms for various church activities have been built in connection with the church.

Big Danish Gift for the Church in Skálholt.

New gifts for the new church in the old see of Skálholt are still arriving. Recently it was announced that two business men in Copenhagen have presented the church with all the stained glass windows required, a gift which is estimated at a value of 1/4 million Danish crowns. The artistical work has been entrusted to an Icelandic painter.

The church, the foundation stone of which was laid during the celebrations of the 900 years' jubilee of the first Icelandic see last year, is expected to be completed in the autumn of 1958.

NORWAY

A Critical Voice After the Conference in Minneapolis.

The Christian daily newspaper "Dagen" known for its conservative Lutheran and Low-Church views, in a number of leading articles following upon the conference of the Lutheran World Federation in Minneapolis, has expressed rather critical views.

In the first place the paper is dissatisfied with the wish for closer contact with the Roman Catholic Church which was expressed at the meeting by the former President, Bishop Hanns Lilje. On the whole Rome has not changed since the days of Luther - in certain respects she is even further removed from the views on the Scripture of the Reformation - and if the Lutheran Church is also the same to-day as when it was founded, it has no other course than to urge the Church of Rome to turn away from its delusions.

In another article the questions concerning faith and confession are pointed out as being the most important fields of activity of the World Federation. Of the 70 million Lutherans in the world, 20 million are still not members of the Federation, and this is due to the feeling of uncertainty, at least on the part of several of the Churches, as to the attitude of the World Federation in theological matters especially. This is connected with its attitude to the ecumenical movement. Since the meeting in Lund in 1947, the Lutheran World Federation has shown a marked ecumenical tendency, and this was further emphasized in Minneapolis, not the least when Dr. Fry, who is already the Chairman of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, was elected President of the Federation. The United Lutheran Church, of which Dr. Fry is the leader, is described as "that of the Lutheran Churches in America with the greatest affinity to liberalist theology".

The "Dagen" goes on to call the High-Church tendencies which became characteristic of the meeting in Minneapolis "an alarming feature" and expresses the hope that the next world conference which may possibly take place in Oslo, may give another impression. Finally, the Lutheran Churches are requested to concentrate more on the unity of Lutheran faith and confession the next time than on ecumenical unity. "It would also be useful to oppose the strong and well-organized offensive launched by the Roman Catholic Church", the paper believes.

Proposals for Tightening of Legislation on Pornography.

The Norwegian Penal Code Commission has reported to the Ministry of Justice and proposed a sharpening of the provisions dealing with pornography. The present provision, making it illegal to publish or otherwise distribute writings, pictures, etc. of immoral contents, should be preserved, but to this should be added a clause, stipulating the penalty for publishing or distributing writings, pictures, etc., which "are obviously immoral or likely to influence children and young people in a coarse and vulgar manner, when the object of publication is deemed to be predominantly one of financial exploitation of the interest in sexuality, violence, or criminality".

The report goes on to say that the limits for what makes a description immoral or indecent have hitherto been rather vague and are being interpreted very widely, according to present public opinion in Norway, not the least in regard to fiction and poetry and other books. But on the other hand, it cannot be tolerated that fictitious literature and art should be exempt from legal proceedings - in other words enjoy complete freedom of the press. "Also an artist must, when he exhibits his production to the public, put that restraint upon himself that he does not so grossly offend the public standard of decency that his work may be called immoral. To publish such works is an affront to the order of society", the report states.

The proposal, which was unanimously endorsed by the Penal Code Commission, has given rise to a lively debate. Religious quarters are, on the whole, satisfied with the report, although the two Christian dailies ironically enquire whether pornographic products become less indecent or vulgar if it cannot be proved that the predominant object has been that of financial gain. They feel that this stipulation ought to be deleted.

The President of the Norwegian Authors' Association, Hans Heiberg, is firmly opposed to the report, however, as he wants unrestricted freedom of the press in regard to fiction and poetry. He describes the Public Prosecutor, who has raised a charge of pornography against the author, Agnar Mykle, and has contributed to the wording of the report of the Penal Code Commission, as "the meanest enemy of spiritual liberty in Norway since the beginning of this century".

Norwegian Army Chaplains Call for Ideological Re-Armament.

On behalf of the Corps of Army Chaplains the Head of the Norwegian army chaplains, Colonel Erling Ulltveit, in a letter to the various sections of the Defence Forces has appealed for ideological re-armament. The "cold war" which we experience to-day is a highly ideological and psychological warfare. In this situation we feel it of great importance that the democracies should reconsider their Christian and humanistic heritage so that the members of the NATO

may mobilize a spiritual force to be expressed in a deliberate choice of ideological conviction", the letter states.

Accompanying the letter is a leaflet by Dr. Øjvind Skard, Ph.D., on "Psychological Defence Preparations in the Age of Ideologies". In this leaflet the author points out that also in peace time a war goes on about the minds of people and false ideologies, as for instance Communism, have far too easy play in the case of people who have no definite conception of life. Therefore it is of vital importance to make it quite clear to ourselves and others what it is we want to defend, and to "create a spiritual quality in the nation which is both capable of and willing to give strength to the might and expansiveness of the Western society".

3 % to Church - 50 % Listened to the Radio Service.

Only a few per cent of the Norwegian population go to church on Sunday, it appears from an extensive investigation conducted by a committee set up by the Joint Committee of the Diocesan Councils. The results of the investigation, which were published this summer, have aroused wide attention.

A counting up of the people attending church in 2844 churches showed that the average attendance in the Lutheran churches on Easter Day was 5,8 % of all members of the Lutheran National Church; on ordinary Holy Days it was 2,7 %. The last figure goes up to 3,2 % if the many invalids, small children, and old people who are quite unable to go to church are taken into consideration. It is typical that the percentage of attendance in church is highest in the parishes with fewest inhabitants.

However, 53 % of those asked in a Gallup poll answered, that they had listened in to the church service transmitted in the radio on the previous Sunday, 5 % that they had been to church last Sunday, 3 % some time during the last four months, and 56 % during the last year. 30 % had tuned in on the morning prayers in the radio the same day, 54 % during the last week. Only 23 % of those questioned had taken part in private devotions in the home, and no-one below the age of 40 had taken part in family prayers "quite recently". Only 13 % had said grace at table recently. 75 % of all parents teach their children to say evening prayers.

On the basis of this investigation the Committee has now proceeded to get in touch with the parish councils throughout the country in order to find new ways for increasing attendance in church on Sundays.

Died.

At the age of 84 the former Bishop of Agder Diocese in Norway, James Maroni, has died. He was the Bishop of Agder from 1930 - 1947.

SWEDEN

Swedish Church Synod On Women Pastors, New Interment Act, etc.

The Swedish Church Synod under the Chairmanship of Archbishop Yngve Brilioth met in the Swedish House of Parliament on Monday, September 2nd. The Synod which is the highest court in matters relating to the Swedish Lutheran National Church and, among other things, has the right of veto in regard to Bills proposed by the Government in connection with Church affairs, consists of 100 members, 43 clergymen, the Bishops included, and 57 laymen.

Among the many important matters to be considered by the Synod, one in particular has been very lively discussed beforehand, namely whether women should be allowed to take Holy Orders in the National Lutheran Church. The Swedish Government Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs has proposed a Bill to this effect this summer, to come into force from July 1st, 1958; but if the Synod is opposed to the Bill, it cannot be passed. In his motivation for the Bill, the Minister referred, among other things, to the fact that two thirds of the congregations and other Church authorities approached about their views, go in for women pastors. The Minister does not feel it justified to limit the instances, where women may be appointed pastors, to only those parishes where there is already one male pastor, as has been suggested from a preparatory committee.

Since the introduction of the Bill, the Swedish press has published a number of contributions on the matter, which has also been debated in the radio. Two books have been published in this connection, both by the Publishing House of the Home Mission (Diakonistyrelsen). The one book is mostly adversely inclined towards women pastors, the other contains a number of facts concerning women pastors in other parts of the world (Märta Tamm-Götlind: Kvinnliga präster jorden runt.)

It may be supposed that the majority of clergymen are against women pastors, but no-one has dared to prophesy with any certainty about the result of the ballot in the Synod.

Among the other questions to be discussed at the Synod is a new Interment Act, introduced in the Swedish Parliament. This stipulates, among other things, that the church buildings of the Swedish Lutheran National Church should also be available for interments which do not follow the ritual of the National Church, as long as they are conducted in a worthy manner and without offence to Christian feelings.

Furthermore, decision must be taken in regard to a new Bill about the election of clergymen, which in more cases than at present, would give the Cathedral Chapters the right to nominate clergymen and which would loosen the "diocesan tie", i.e. the duty of clergymen always to do service within the borders of their own diocese A new proposal for the election of a bishop will also be debated. This would give the laity the same amount of influence on the election of a bishop as that of the clergy, while it has been almost exclusively the clergymen of a diocese who have elected a new bishop up to now.

European Methodist Conference in Stockholm.

A European Methodist Church conference took place in Stockholm from July 29th to August 2nd. Taking part in the conference were representatives from most of the European countries in which there is a Methodist Church. Estonia and Latvia were not represented, however. From an organizational point of view, the European Methodist Churches are quite closely connected with the American branch of Methodism, but it was noteworthy that also the English Methodists, who were previously rather sharply opposed to the Americans, were also represented in Stockholm.

At he conference a number of subjects of common interest were debated, among them the training of missionaries, work among young people, and the information service of the Church. At a festive gathering in one of the great halls of the Town Hall, the Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm extended a hearty welcome to the conference members on behalf of the Swedish Ecumenical Council, and from the addresses of the evening the positive attitude of the Methodist Church towards ecumenical efforts became clearly evident.

National Church on the Decline - a Confessional Church on the Way.

It caused considerable attention when the Bishop of the Diocese of Stockholm, Helge Ljungberg, in his annual report to the clergymen of the diocese this summer declared that in his opinion the Folk Church was on the decline and that a confessional church was beginning to develop.

This statement was based on the fact that only 2,1 % of the population of Stockholm go to church in the course of a week, and that the percentage of christenings is dropping quickly (from 1940-1941 91 % of all children were christened, from 1945- 1950 89 %, and 1951-1956 only 86 %), while at the same time the number of communicants has risen to almost the double figure during the last 10 years.

The statistics quoted by the Bishop show that 1,03 % of the population take part in the morning services on Sundays, and 2,1 %, if all the services during the week are included in the investigation. It was also evident from the statistics that the attendance in church is higher in percentage the lower the number of inhabitants in the parish.

As a supplement to these figures it may be mentioned, however, that another investigation during the summer has shown that 25 % of the inhabitants of Sweden listen regularly to the services in the radio. 25 % of those interrogated answered that they had listened to the radio service on the previous Sunday, 63 % during the last month.

More Than 120 Clergymen Warn Against Use of Nuclear Weapons by Defence Force.

Approximately 120 clergymen in the Swedish Lutheran National Church warn against supplying the Swedish Defence Forces with nuclear weapons. Among the signatures of the resolution are those of Director Olov Hartman, Sigtuna, and Dean Nils Bolander, Lund.

The resolution maintains that the possession of nuclear weapons impairs rather than increases the safety of the country. At the same time it expresses its full support of the Swedish proposal in the United Nations that all experiments with nuclear weapons should be suspended until the United Nations Commission has delivered its report upon the danger arising from radioactive rays.

The General Assembly of the Mission Covenant Church (Svenska Missionsförbundet) in a public declaration demands the cessation of nuclear experiments, and requests the Government, through the United Nations to contribute towards this as well as towards a total ban on employing nuclear weapons altogether.

News in Brief.

- Dean Axel Hambraeus' book "Prästen i Uddarbo" (The Vicar of Uddarbo) which has been translated into several foreign languages is being filmed in Sweden at the moment with Max von Sydow in the leading part.

- The radio station in Tangier of the Pentecost Mission, I.B.R.A., which has just completed its second year of existence, now broadcasts in 16 different languages. The Swedish programmes are regularly heard by 200.000 people in Sweden, according to a recent investigation.